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## Conservation corps helps keep home out of Yakima River

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By Sara Schilling, Herald Valley bureau

D.J. Shook anchored part of a tree trunk to the bank of the Yakima River in West Richland on Wednesday as members of his Washington State Conservation Corps crew pounded cut trees or branches into the steep slope.

By the end of today, the group is expected to have finished stabilizing a 100-by-30-foot section of river frontage off North Grosscup Road, a project organized by the Benton Conservation District, an agency aimed at protecting renewable natural resources and promoting conservation practices.

"I'm delighted. They've been really great," said Lynn Ballmann, who bought the home that sits on the edge of the bank with her husband 36 years ago.

After flooding in 1996 and a later problem with irrigation piping made the already steep slope of mostly highly erodible river sand even more unstable, Ballmann contacted the conservation district for help. She will pay about \$8,000 for the work.

Work began Monday, and Kenton Rod, a natural resource scientist with the district, said the effort will keep sediments and the Ballmann home from going into the river.

Conservation corps members used an erosion-control blanket, which looks like a giant burlap sack, anchored tree trunks and put in willow and poplar posts to firm up the bank. The corps is a program within the state Department of Ecology that puts young people to work on environmental projects.

Wheat grasses, water birch and other vegetation also are to be planted at the site, said Paul Cleary, an engineer for area conservation districts who helped with the project.

Rod said using trees and grasses over materials like concrete won't take energy from the river or create problems downstream while fixing the problem.

"It's a benefit to the home and a benefit to the environment," he said.

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Rudy Guzman of the Washington State Conservation Corps helps secure an anchored log to stabilize a section of the Yakima River shore on Wednesday. The group, along with the Benton Conservation District, is working to slow erosion of the shoreline near a West Richland home.

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38 photos.